

The process of decision making

As important as the consideration of ethical issues and the development of ethical argument is the **process** of discussion. In discussing ethical issues the CEC should adopt a process that is transparent and can be subject to critical appraisal. In this context it may wish to consider the following:

- The role of Chair in ensuring contribution of all views
- If the CEC can justify and test its views by use of counter-argument
- How the discussion is documented for future review.
- How information is conveyed to those involved in the case.

Further information

In addition, this resource pack includes:

- Suggested further reading
- Useful websites addresses
- A brief summary of professional guidance in this area
- A brief summary of the legal issues

We hope you find this resource pack helpful as a tool in providing the ethics education to members of the CEC. Two other packs are available on Ethics & Genetics and Ethics & the Vulnerable Patient. For copies of these packs and further information please contact:

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Introduction to the ethics education resource pack

This resource pack is designed to be used by a clinical ethics committee or group as part of a process of self education of committee members. It provides an introduction to the ethical issues arising in resource allocation, and uses a specific case to facilitate a discussion of how these issues impact on day to day clinical practice, and how an ethics committee may approach such a case. It is therefore most useful for ethics committees /groups that are starting to work together to discuss these issues.

The pack can also be used by new members of a clinical ethics committee as an introduction to clinical ethics and the role of an ethics committee.

How to use the resource pack

The idea is that the resource pack will provide tools to facilitate discussion of the ethical issues arising in the case study.

Before the meeting

The suggested pre meeting reading provides background information on this topic. In addition it will be useful for members to read the documents

- Introduction to Moral Theories and principles that inform ethical decision-making in healthcare.
- Specific ethical issues relevant to resource allocation in healthcare
- A structured approach to case consultation

At the meeting

The case study should form the focus of the discussion. In discussing the case, CEC members should consider:

- Whether any more information is needed?
- How to identify ethical issues?
- Process of ethical discussion - use of ethical frameworks / counter arguments / case comparison
- What is the best course of action in this case, and what are the ethical justifications for this course?

The document **issues to consider** in this case may act as a useful prompt during or after the discussion. It is not an exhaustive list of the issues. The committee may identify other issues, or wish to reconsider an issue already covered in the discussion.

These documents do not attempt to provide a definitive answer, nor do they provide a comprehensive list of every ethical issue arising. Rather this ethics education resource pack aims to develop and facilitate the skills of the CEC (and a CEC with experience in this area may simply wish to use the case study as a basis for discussion).